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An
Essay
on
Phlegmasia Dolens,
for the
Degree
of
Doctor of Medicine,
by
Isaac P. Smith
of
Pennsylvania.
1825.

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An
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Phlegmatia Dolens.

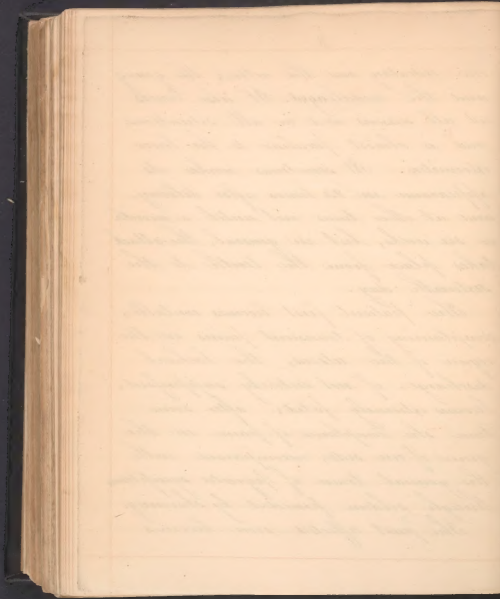
The tumid-leg of lying-in women has been described by different authors under a variety of names; as, phlegmatia dolens, phlegmatia lactea, ecchymoma lymphatica, anasarca serosa, oedematis and by Dr Good, bucnemia sparganosis; or sparganosis puerperarum. These have been the result of the different theories which have been invented to explain the nature of the affection, few of which convey to us an exact meaning, and some are obviously erroneous: Upon the whole, the last, or sparganosis puerperarum is, perhaps, the most appropriate.

This disease attacks women of all ranks and habits; the healthy and the sceleratary; the lean and the corpulent,

the sedentary and the active; the young and the middle-aged. It also occurs at all seasons and in all situations; and is almost peculiar to the lower extremities. It sometimes makes its appearance in 24 hours after delivery, and at other times not until a month or six weeks, but in general, the attack takes place from the tenth to the sixteenth day.

The patient first becomes irritable, complaining of transient pains in the region of the uterus, the lochial discharge, if not entirely suppressed, becomes extremely fetid; after some time she complains of pain in the groin of one side, accompanied with the general train of pyretic symptoms, though seldom preceded by shivering.

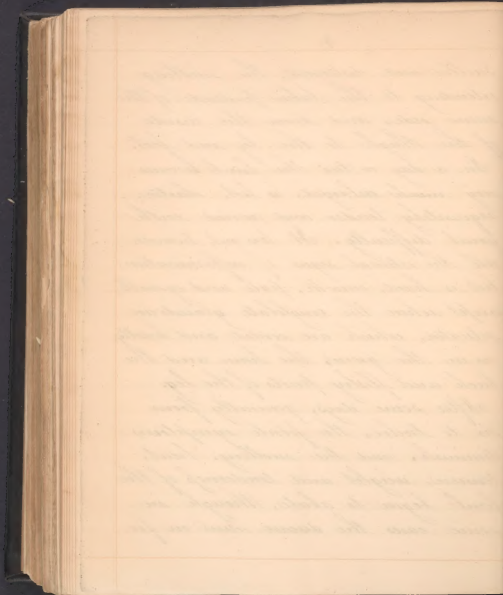
The part affected soon becomes



swelled and distended, the swelling extending to the labia pudendi of the same side, and down the inside of the thigh to the leg and foot.

In a day or two the limb becomes very much enlarged, is hot, elastic, exquisitely tender and moved with great difficulty. It has not, however, all the external signs of inflammation, but is hard, smooth, pale and equal, except where the conglomerate glands are situated, which are corded and knotty, as in the groin, the ham and the back and fleshy parts of the leg.

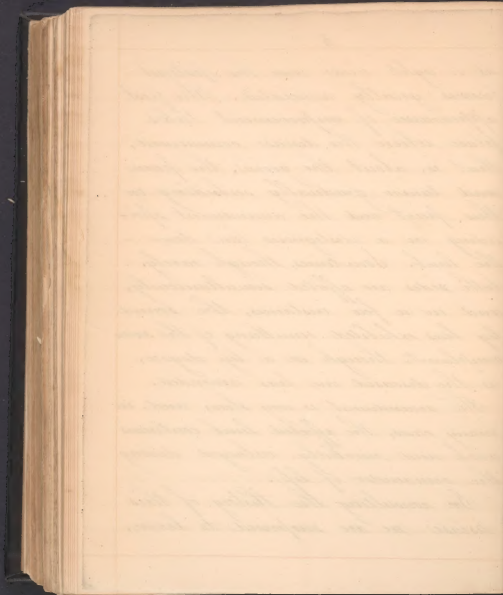
After some days, generally from six to twelve, the febrile symptoms diminish, and the swelling, heat, tension, weight and tenderness of the limb begin to abate, though in some cases the disease runs on for



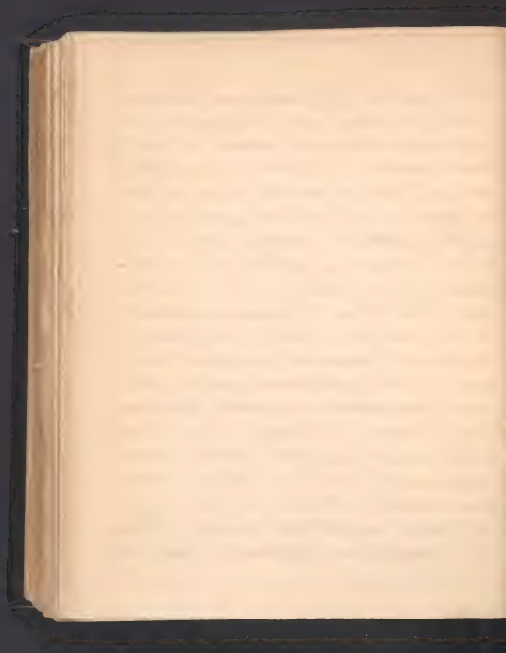
six or eight weeks and the patient becomes greatly emaciated. The first appearance of improvement takes place where the disease commenced, that is, about the groin, the pain and tumor gradually subsiding in this part and the amendment spreading in a contiguous line down the limb. Sometimes, though rarely, both sides are affected simultaneously, and in a few instances, the sound leg has exhibited something of the same complaint, though in a less degree, as the diseased one has amended.

The amendment is very slow, and, in many cases, the affected limb continues weak and morbidly enlarged during the remainder of life.

In consulting the history of this disease we are surprised to learn,

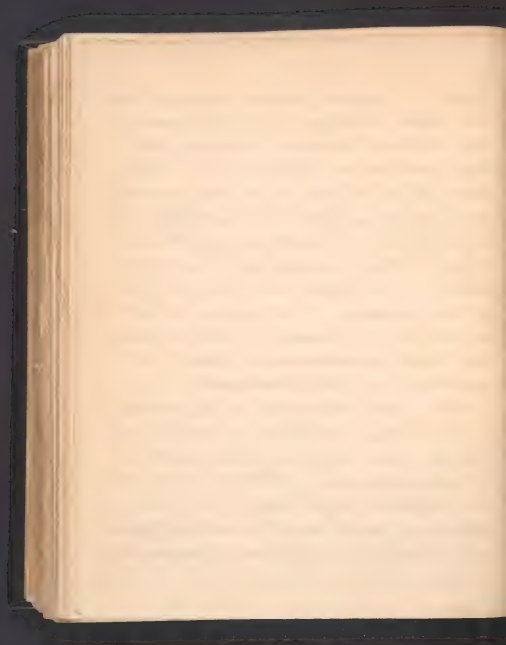


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That neither Hippocrates nor his suc-
cessors for many ages, have given us
any circumstantial account of it,
and indeed so little is said, that
we are left in doubt as to its real
existence until the commencement
of the fifteenth century, when a
short account is given in a publi-
cation by d. Castro, of the swelled
and hard legs of women incident
to the puerperal state, and also a
method of treatment proposed; but
even in this dissertation many of the
most important symptoms have not
been recorded, although there is not
much doubt but the author was
acquainted with the disease under
consideration. From the time of
d. Castro until the death of Bozzas,
this complaint appears to have been



known to serious writers, amongst whom were Wiseman and Mauriceau; the latter of these two observing the very unnatural state of the lochia, and that it was frequently entirely suppressed, ascribed the swelling of the limb to a metastasis of this discharge, then considering the suppuration as the cause and not an effect of the disease. It is obvious that under the influence of such a theory, but little advancement could be expected in the treatment.

After the appearance of the posthumous writings of Puzos in 1759 a new theory was adopted of the nature of this singular affection — it was now supposed to be merely the redundancy of milk and a morbid disposition taking place in consequence



This redundancy, and hence has
been called *duplex latens*, whose name is
still retained amongst the French
although few, if any, consider this
piece of its formation as correct.

The next writers who mention
accounts of *Whitmania* derive from Mr. White,
Mr. Mac, Mr. Davis and Mr. Hall. The
saying of Mr. White appeared in 1835
but instead of considering it in detail
& 'mix', he supposed it to be owing
to an extravasation from the spermatic
veins or from the prostate of
the bladder dead against the base
of the testes during a severe labour
pain, and the extravasated fluid
not being duly absorbed. Were this
correct, we should have the disease
occurring at a more regular period
after delivery, and as the tumour



are capable of sustaining considerable violence,
 it would never succeed an easy labour.
 Mr. Syge refers it to obstruction of the
 lymphatic glands, and Dr. Ferriar to
 inflammation of the side affected generally.
 The next writer on the subject was
 Dr. Whill of Manchester. This author
 rejects all the preceding doctrines of the
 disease as being inadequate to explain
 its nature, and presents us with a
 copacious theory, the result of his own
 investigation and experience. He
 maintains that the proximate cause
 consists in an inflammatory affection,
 producing suddenly a considerable
 effusion of serum and coagulable
 lymph from the vessels into the
 cellular membrane of the limb. This
 is perhaps the most plausible man-
 ner of accounting for the nature of



this strange disease yet offered to the medical world; yet, upon a critical examination, even this will be found insufficient to account for many of its phenomena, and in some respects at variance with the pathological doctrines of the present day, especially as regards inflammation.

D^r Hall supposed the inflammatory affection to exist in the muscular cellular and cutaneous tissues at the same time, and occasionally even to involve the neighbouring blood vessels, nerves, glands and lymphatics: but such a sudden and extensive inflammation, involving organs and parts so numerous and dissimilar, is not now believed to ever take place. Were it of the nature supposed by D^r Hall we should have that florid red colour so peculiar to



acute inflammation, in lieu of the pale
 un-phlegmatic appearance of the lochia
 which invariably attends *phlegmata dolens*.

Although this is a disease of the
 puerperal state, when the Uterus has
 just previously undergone a great change
 in its condition, and still remains
 in a critical state to be acted upon
 by the exciting causes of disease: and
 although previous to the appearance
 of the fever, swelling &c. the more im-
 portant characteristics of the complaint,
 the patient always feels the sensation
 of pain either transient or fixed in the
 region of the Uterus — a great and
 unnatural change takes place in the
 lochial discharge, frequently it is
 entirely suppressed, and when it does
 continue to flow, it is very small
 in quantity and excretes an extremely



fetid odour, evidently denoting functional
 derangement in the organ by which
 it is produced. Although so many
 syphilis seems to indicate it, still
 not one of all those who have previously
 written on syphilis, has suggested
 an allusion to the primary 'seat' of the
 disease; but since the affection is localized
 in this organ, it must be extremely pro-
 bable, and should thus be conceded it
 will be easy to account for the rest
 of the phenomena. From the sympathy
 that exists between parts of a similarity
 of structure, and the uterus being in
 some respects of the nature of a gland
 and performing similar functions, we
 may rationally suppose that a disor-
 dered state of that organ would sym-
 ptomatically affect the glands in its im-
 mediate neighbourhood, and that they



would become inflamed and unable to perform their functions — the circulation of the lymphatic beer is interrupted, and the lymphatics, in consequence of their stunted state, yield to the undue accumulation, become morbidly distended and inflamed in consequence of this distension; thus producing all the distressing symptoms incident to the complaint.

Under this name explaining the nature of phlegmatid delus to consider a general mode of treatment would be somewhat varied and perhaps some additional remedies be considered necessary. In the treatment the indications would be first to restore the healthy functions of the uterus. secondly, to calm the febrile action induced in the general system, and thirdly, to adapt a

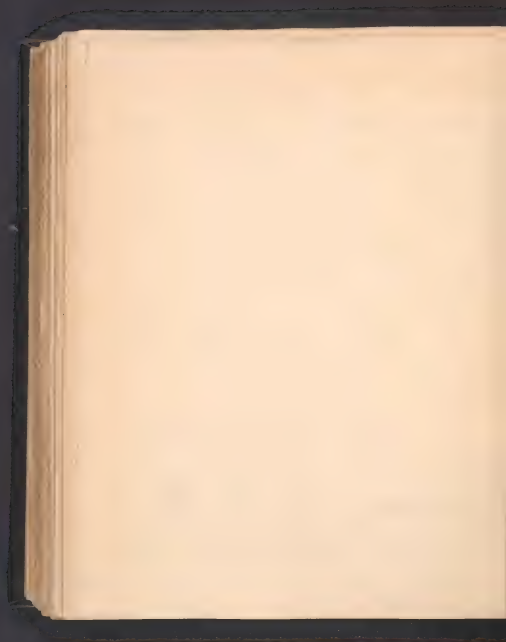


own remedies suited to the nature of the
disease. To supply the various indications
our remedies must be such as will
act on the blood, not by being applied
directly to it or in its im-
mediate vicinity; and yet such as
act upon it by an indirect means
upon the general system. The most
valuable means of mild and long-continued
action, in order to remove morbid
secretions and draw down excessive
genuinations of the abdomen &c. is
the exhibition of a blister at one of the above
sites. When used not upon the limbs
it causes the general system to bleed-
within, purging alternate evacuations, and
the exhibition of diet to be as not at
all unless calculated to give nourishment
without. In the house is best to be
employed in the early stage and



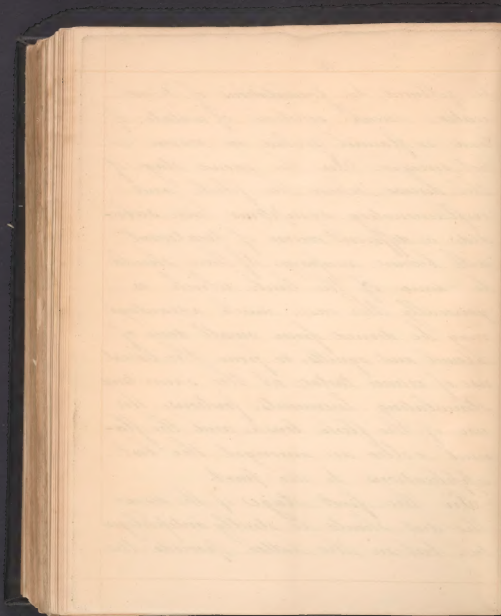
it is to sustain, participating in an
unnatural excitement to a great degree,
we should consider it well to be minded
to surgery and medicine does it
anxiety or inconvenience, are a relation
narrowly and generally have attached
with decided advantage, acting first,
as a purge, and secondly, from its general
influence over the secretory organs,
it is restoring the healthy functions
of the Mercur. to allow pain, which
is generally very great, to subside
to give.

The local applications to the throat
during the first stage are first known to the
gums, which are very useful if the
inflammation is violent, though generally
Rubes over the part will be attended
with more advantage, these may



to be followed by fomentations of tepid water, weak solution of acetate of lead or flannel soaked in warm or hot vinegar. In the second stage of the disease, when the febrile and inflammatory symptoms have subsided, a different course of treatment will become necessary. If there should be oedema of the limb, which is generally the case, much advantage may be derived from small doses of calomel and squills, or from the liberal use of emetic tartar, at the same time stimulating liniments, frictions, the use of the flesh brush, and the flannel roller are amongst the best applications to the part.

In the first stage of the disease the diet should be strictly antiphlogistic, but in the latter periods the



more nutritious and stimulating articles,
together with the moderate use of
wine, bark &c. will be necessary.

Correct copy

Improper division of syllables p 7

Many have made same. imprudent